

Punta Mulas Light
(Faro de Punta Mulas)
on Point Mulas
Isabel II
Vieques Island
Puerto Rico

HAER No. PR-15

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Punta Mulas Light
(Faro de Punta Mulas)

PR-15

Location: On Point Mulas, Harbor of Isabel II, on the western shore of Vieques Island - 10 miles east of Puerto Rico
Position: $18^{\circ} 09.4' W - 65^{\circ} 30.9' W$

Date of Erection: 1895

Present Owner: U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Coast Guard

Original Owner: Central Lighthouse Commission
Colonial Public Works Office
Harbor and Port Section
Government of Spain

Present Use: Dwelling

Significance: The structure was built in 1895. Its background is the capital city of Vieques, Isabel II, and the central hills of the island.

The brick and stone lighthouse, originally painted light blue with white trimmings, followed official design. It is a rectangular dwelling built around the tower. The base, 3 x 2.8 mts. opens to the vestibule, 5 x 3.2 mts. A cast-iron winding stairway, 1.6 mt. in diameter, leads to the lantern. A door in the tower opens to the roof. The lantern is cylindrical, 1.6 mt. in diameter, made of cast-iron, copper, and glass. Originally it was lined with teak wood. The outside brick gallery is enclosed by a cast-iron balustrade.

The original illuminating apparatus was a 6th order, lenticular, 1895 fixed red Barbier & Bernard lens with an 8 mile range. It was 30 cm. in diameter and was formed by 4 panels; 5 elements in each panel of the central drum; 3 prisms on each panel above the central drum and 2 prisms below. The lens was held in place by a cast-iron pedestal. The keeper's quarters were located north of the vestibule: a 4.95 x

3.25 mts. living room, a 4.95 x 2.55 mts. dormitory and another, 4.95 x 3.40 mts. West of the tower base, opening into the rear patio a 3.75 x 3.40 mts. kitchen-dining area was found. It had a 1.5 x 0.64 mt. pantry room recessed into the tower base. South of the vestibule, the engineer's room, 4.95 x 3.2 mts. were located. Finally, two more rooms were found in the SW corner: a 3.4 x 2.1 mts. oil room and a 2.7 x 3.4 mts. storeroom connected by a common door. The entire structure was 16.2 x 10.6 x 5.7 mts. The external decorative elements are identical to those of Punta Figuras and Punta Mulas.

The original structure went through several alterations in the 1940's: the brick roof was rebuilt in reinforced concrete; the old north and south kitchen walls were torn down partially and new openings were made for doors; the oil room became the new pantry and the storeroom a dining area; the office room became the storeroom and the engineer's room a bedroom; the old vestibule was transformed into a living room and the living room became the new office. Most of the original interior woodwork was retained, though. In 1944 further alterations were introduced: the 1940 pantry became a power plant; the dining room a battery room; the storeroom a bathroom and space was made up for a new storeroom out of the office. The original interior woodwork was again retained. Also retained was the original lantern as well as the old cistern and well.

In 1949 the light was converted into an unattended automatic light and boarded up. Since the 1960's, the lighthouse has been reoccupied and on a relatively permanent basis someone has been taking care of the premises. The light characteristics also went through several changes, at least seven, since 1902.

The lighthouse was established as a minor local light to guide the navigation through a very dangerous passage formed by a chain of reefs,

among these, the renowned Caballo Blanco on the Vieques Sound, and the Vieques Passage. It was also of key importance for the sea traffic going through San Juan Passage. Thus, the lighthouse has the unique position to act as a minor light-bridge between Punta Tuna, Culebrita, and Cabo San Juan Lights.

In terms of its altered structure, the building testifies to its adaptability to modern needs without discarding basic original elements.

Transmitted by:

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